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Cartoons counter our numbness to modern wars: *Caricaturist*



INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE 4

Iran warns new US aggression could trigger wider war beyond region

2

How Beijing is positioning its chess pieces



By Mahdi Zolfaghari
Associate professor of Asian Studies

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

In the era of transition in the international order from unipolar hegemony toward a multifaceted structure, the People's Republic of China has adopted a distinct and calculated approach in the arena of diplomacy and global strategy. Unlike traditional Western powers that frequently resort to hard military instruments, overt interventionism, or the imposition of normative values, Beijing has implemented a paradigm grounded in "structured pragmatism" and "long-term systematic planning." Within this conceptual framework, two primary drivers—namely geopolitical positioning and leadership in emerging technologies—have evolved into the twin pillars of Beijing's steady yet inexorable rise to power.

By stepping out of its historical defensive posture, China has transformed geopolitics from a concept confined to territorial borders into an arena of "strategic connectivity." The Belt and Road Initiative stands as the clearest manifestation of this systematic vision. Through massive investments in critical seaports, transcontinental railways, transit corridors, and energy infrastructure across Asia, Africa, and Latin America, Beijing has woven an economic network deeply interlinked with its own economy. This pragmatic methodology has minimized the vulnerability of China's traditional maritime chokepoints while simultaneously binding target nations into the orbit of mutual economic interests with Beijing. In this win-win matrix, geopolitics is no longer a theater for military campaigns; rather, it has become the main artery for stabilizing supply chains, securing enduring energy imports, and creating dedicated export markets.

Page 2

Pezeshkian urges overhaul of targeted aid

8



President Masoud Pezeshkian (C) chairs a Government Information Council meeting in Tehran, Iran, on November 1, 2026.
president.ir



Central bank chief vows tougher action against money laundering in banks

3



Wrestling World Championships:

Javan stuns Uguev, Zare' retains super heavyweight supremacy

6



Restoration underway at Iran's iconic Soltaniyeh Dome

7

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The satellite image taken over the US navy base – Naval Support Activity Bahrain – on July 23, 2026, displays extensive damage to the satellite communications system and warehouses. ● *AP*

Iran warns new US aggression could trigger wider war beyond region

International Desk

Iran once again warned of a "decisive response" to any new adventurism by the United States against Iran, with the Army's spokesman saying that any renewed aggression would trigger a confrontation extending beyond the region.

Iran's Defense Minister Mehrdad Akhlaghi on Sunday warned of a "proportionate, decisive, and impactful response" to any attack on the country.

"Those who pose threats will not dictate the scope, timing, or consequences of Iran's defensive response," he said.

Army spokesman Mohammad Akraminia also said on Saturday a potential future war could last longer than previous conflict, and the American president would not be in a position to dictate the timing or the conditions of its conclusion.

He was referring to the most intense phase of the fighting in the war that began on February 28 with US-Israeli strikes on Iran. Iran responded by launching missiles and drones at the US military bases across the region.

"Should a new military adventure be launched, US facilities, equipment, personnel, and interests could be targeted wherever they are within reach," he added.

Also on Sunday, Hossein Mohebbi, the spokesperson of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps echoed the remarks made by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Mojtaba Khamenei in a written message the day before.

"In a conflict with America, there are no geographical limitations; a vast theatre has been defined for inflicting damage upon the enemy," Mohebbi said.

Ayatollah Khamenei on Saturday ordered senior military commanders to ensure that any level or type of enemy threat is met with an "immediate, impactful, and geographically unrestricted response."

On the same day, US President Donald Trump claimed the US has knocked out much of Iran's military but still has to "take care of" one or two targets.

"We've knocked out their nuclear. We still have to take care of, I would say one or two sites, but we can do that in 10 minutes," Trump said.

Despite escalating threats from both parties, diplomatic mediators are making every effort to avert a renewed military confrontation between Tehran and Washington.

A senior Emirati official said on Sunday that the UAE is hoping for a breakthrough in negotiations between Iran and the United States while being prepared for the worst.

"We're hoping that there is a diplomatic breakthrough," diplomatic adviser to the Emirati president Anwar Gargash said during a conference in Manama.

"It is not the interest of the region to go through another round... But I think we're also, as we've shown before, braced for the worst."

Following a visit to Tehran this week by a Qatari delegation, Iran has dispatched envoys to the Persian Gulf country to continue consultations as part of indirect negotiations with the US to end the war.

Araghchi reiterates Strait of Hormuz will reopen a day after US accepts conditions

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi reiterated that Iran will reopen the Strait of Hormuz one day after the United States gives a positive response to its seven conditions.

According to spokesman for Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee Hassan Qashqavi, the Iranian foreign minister made the remarks during a meeting with the committee members on Sunday.

"If the other side gives a positive response to Iran's seven conditions based on the Islamabad negotiations, the Strait of Hormuz will certainly be reopened the following day," Qashqavi quoted the foreign minister as saying.

During the meeting, Araghchi added that Tehran was awaiting a response from the other side, stressing that the next move would depend on how Washington responds to the existing diplomatic initiatives.

His remarks come as Iranian negotiators met Qatari mediators in Doha aimed at pushing for a deal to end the US-Israeli war on Iran, an official briefed on the discussions told Reuters.

The talks come amid concerns that the conflict could escalate again after the November 3 US midterm elections. President Donald Trump has said the United States will not launch new attacks on Iran before the vote and that talks with Tehran have been productive, though he has not ruled out further military action thereafter.

Iran has repeatedly said it would respond to any new attacks by striking US and Israeli targets in neighboring countries, as the eight-month-old war continues to disrupt global oil supplies and spill over across the Middle East.

US 'prefers diplomacy'

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Saturday that Trump has not decided whether to launch new strikes against Iran, but would prefer to resolve the conflict diplomatically.

Qatari mediators were in Tehran on Friday for discussions with Iranian officials before moving the talks to Doha on Saturday. The talks were being coordinated in regular contacts with Washington, an official said.

Araghchi in an interview with Al Jazeera on Saturday said that Tehran had carefully reviewed a message sent by US Vice President JD Vance and discussed it at high-level meetings, describing Washington's efforts to open a broader channel for dialogue as a "positive step".

The Wall Street Journal reported on Wednesday that Vance had sent a letter to Iran's security chief at the direction of President Donald Trump in a bid to revive negotiations and avert further US strikes.

Qatar's Al-Araby Al-Jadeed newspaper claimed that an American delegation was expected to join the diplomatic process in Doha.

However, the Iranian foreign minister said there is currently no plans for a meeting with US officials.

Tehran sees no need for a meeting with the American side under the current circumstances, he said, adding that Iran's conditions were clear and mediators were continuing consultations over them.

How Beijing is ...

On the other hand, while the instruments of global dominance in the twentieth century were fossil fuels and conventional military might, power in today's world is contingent upon mastery over foundational technologies. Grasping this fundamental shift, leaders in Beijing have elevated self-reliance programs and scientific supremacy to the topmost priority of national security. China's commanding position in next-generation telecommunications, artificial intelligence, microchip supply chains, advanced battery technologies, and clean vehicles has decisively redefined its strategic weight.

Page 1 ›

This technological prowess fulfills a dual function: on the one hand, it serves as a shield of invulnerability against Western trade pressures and sanctions; on the other hand, through the export of digital infrastructure, smart city solutions, and telecommunications networks to developing countries, it turns Chinese standards and protocols into the operating architecture of the world's future. When communication and computing infrastructures across large swathes of the globe operate on Chinese standards, Beijing's strategic influence will not stem from enforced militarism, but will exist as an integral, indispensable facet of nations' daily life.

The complementary pillar to these capacities is China's structured diplomatic conduct. By transcending conventional Western dichotomies and refraining from categorizing nations into rigid binaries, Beijing has established its external relations on the principles of mutual benefit, respect for territorial sovereignty, and sustainable development. China's constructive role in brokering the normalization of ties between Tehran and Riyadh, alongside its assertive engagement in emerging alignments such as BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, demonstrates that Beijing intends to present itself to the international community as a "reliable, developmental, and balancing partner."

Ultimately, the astute convergence of infrastructural geopolitics and technological capability—channeled through a sustained, pragmatic worldview—has transformed China from the world's primary factory into the architect of a new international order. Along this trajectory, without becoming entangled in the quagmire of wars of attrition, Beijing is actively rewriting the rules of global power, security, and trade: a steady yet unstoppable trajectory that will anchor the foundations of the future international system ever more firmly around Beijing's strategic intent and capability.

Iran designates UK navy, air force as 'terrorist organizations', declares MI6 hostile

International Desk

Iran has designated the British spy agency MI6 as a hostile group and declared the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force terrorist organizations in retaliation for London's malicious actions against the Islamic Republic.

In a statement released on Sunday, the Iranian Foreign Ministry announced the designation, citing the UK's participation in the illegal US-Israeli war against Iran and the country's decision on July 13 to designate the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) as a "threat" under the so-called National Security (State Threats) Act 2026.

The ministry said that it is acting under "the Law on Countermeasures Against the Declaration of the IRGC as a Terrorist Organization" and in response to the "hostile actions" taken by the British government against Iran over the past year, including providing the aggressors access to military bases and military and logistical facilities located within territories under its jurisdiction.

"As of the publication of this statement (November 1, 2026), the UK's foreign intelligence service (MI6) is designated as a hostile group pursuant to Note 2 of Article 1 of the Law on Intensification of Penalties for Espionage and Collaboration with the Zionist Regime and



● *IRNA*

Hostile States Against National Security and Interests," it added.

Additionally, it continued, "the British Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force shall be subject to the Law on Countermeasures Against the Declaration of the IRGC as a Terrorist Organization by the United States and, accordingly, these two entities are hereby designated as terrorist organizations."

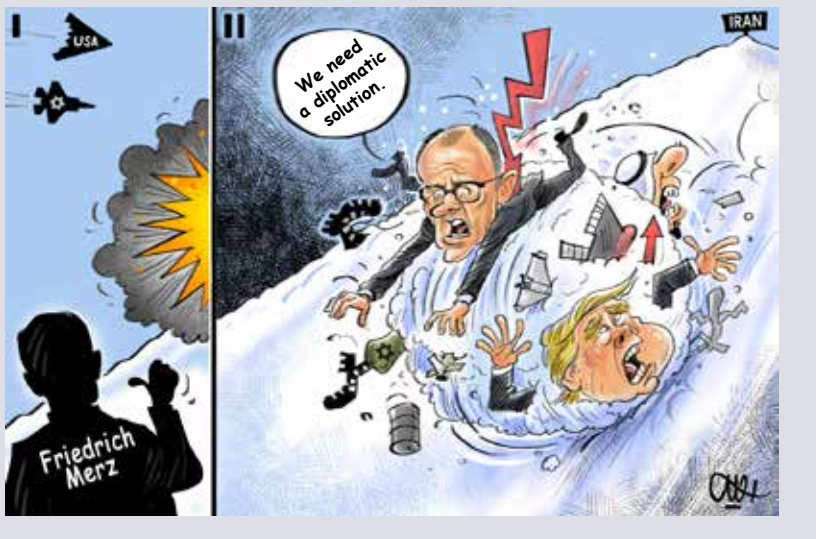
The ministry also condemned Britain's policies and actions as contrary to the principles of the UN Charter and international law, particularly the principles of respect for national sovereignty and the prohibition of unlawful actions against other countries.

The ministry noted that the blacklisting came in accordance with international law and within the framework of the principle of reciprocity.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

CARTOON



Central bank chief vows tougher action against money laundering in banks



Abdolnaser Hemmati

Economy Desk

Iran's central bank will step up supervisory and disciplinary action against banks that fail to meet their obligations to combat money laundering, Governor Abdolnaser Hemmati said, citing a significant number of violations identified across the banking network.

"Banks must not fall short in implementing regulations and fulfilling their responsibilities in this area. The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) is determined to step up its supervisory and disciplinary measures in such cases," Hemmati said at a meeting with bank chief executives, according to ISNA.

Hemmati referred to a report on money laundering violations, some of which had also disrupted the foreign exchange and gold markets.

He said the number of identified violations was considerable, with a significant proportion occurring at bank branches.

He said anti-money laundering units must operate continuously and effectively rather than function merely as administrative bodies.

Bank chief executives, he added, were responsible for violations at their branches and must ensure effective and ongoing oversight of compliance with anti-money laundering regulations.

The central bank would also continuously monitor money laundering-related activities across the banking network and take supervisory and disciplinary action against banks that failed to fulfill their legal obligations, Hemmati said.

His remarks come as Iran's engagement with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the global anti-money laundering watchdog, enters a new phase.

Iran's Financial Intelligence Center said FATF members had acknowledged progress on 10 items of the country's action plan at their latest meeting. However, Iran remains on the watchdog's list of high-risk jurisdictions, and the lifting of restrictions depends on further legal reforms and domestic decisions.

In a statement on the results of FATF's October meeting, the center said members had reached a consensus on progress in part of Iran's commitments following years of efforts and the submission of technical and legal documents, according IRNA.

Iran's efforts to normalize its financial relations with the international system date back more than 20 years, the center said. The action plan was designed to address shortcomings in the country's anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing frameworks and secure its removal from the high-risk list.

However, delays in domestic decision-making and the failure to complete all commitments prevented the full implementation of the plan, the center said.

It added that Iran had spent the past three years working to strengthen its legal and operational frameworks for combating money laundering and terrorist financing and had submitted supporting documents to FATF members.

Liquidity control and financing production

Hemmati also thanked banks for cooperating with the CBI in controlling liquidity growth and called for continued efforts to contain liquidity and maintain economic stability.

He urged bank executives to comply strictly with laws and regulations and direct banking resources toward financing production, businesses and households' genuine needs, while avoiding activities outside their legally defined responsibilities.

According to Hemmati's recent remarks, monthly liquidity growth fell to 1.3% in the sixth month of the Iranian calendar year, which ran from August 23 to September 22. This was the lowest monthly rate since the 10th month of the previous Iranian year, which ran from December 22, 2024, to January 20, 2025.

Year-on-year liquidity growth also declined to 51.6% in the sixth month from a peak of 56.4% in the third month, which ran from May 22 to June 21.

Razi institute proposes joint production, technology transfer with African countries

Economy Desk

Iran's Razi Vaccine and Serum Research Institute has proposed expanding exports, transferring technology, conducting joint research and producing biological products as key areas for strengthening cooperation with African countries, its head Hassan Morovati said.

Speaking at the first national meeting on Iran-Africa agricultural cooperation on Sunday, Morovati said the institute aimed to move beyond conventional product exports toward sustainable partnerships, technology transfer and joint production, according to IRNA.

He outlined six proposed areas of cooperation: expanding exports and maintaining a presence in target markets; transferring technology and developing domestic production; conducting joint research and developing biological products; cooperating on quality control, quality assurance and regulatory affairs; providing specialized training and building capacity; and establishing institutional and regional cooperation networks.

Joint initiatives could range from product exports and the transfer of technical know-how to participation in manufacturing and packaging, as well as joint research projects, Morovati said. Such cooperation could help strengthen the scientific and regulatory capabilities of both sides, he added.

Outlining the institute's previous engagement with African countries, Morovati cited a 2023 webinar attended by 15 Iranian ambassadors to African countries, participation in trade and economic exhibitions in Tanzania and Iran, and negotiations with officials and public and private companies in African countries.

He also pointed to a request from Kenya's foreign minister for the supply of snake antivenom as a potential area of cooperation.



ISNA

Morovati said the Razi Institute was ready to work with African countries not only through product exports but also through technology transfer, training and joint production.

He added that the institute had held training courses for veterinary experts from Mali, Mauritania and Senegal as part of efforts to expand scientific and technical cooperation with African countries.

The first national meeting on Iran-Africa agricultural cooperation opened in Tehran on Saturday, with ambassadors, economic advisers, honorary consuls and more than 200 businesspeople in attendance.

The Razi Institute, established in 1925, has produced more than 60 billion doses of vaccines since 2001, according to figures cited by its then-head, Ali Eshaqi, at a ceremony marking the institute's 100th anniversary in January 2023.

Eshaqi also said at the time that the institute had produced more than 600 million doses of polio vaccine, which he credited with helping save 100 million children.

Iranian oil tanker carrying 2m barrels reaches China after 3-1/2-month voyage



WANA

Economy Desk

A shipment of about 2 million barrels of Iranian oil reached Chinese ports early Sunday after a voyage lasting roughly three and a half months, according to a tanker-tracking firm.

Satellite images confirmed that a tanker linked to Iran had berthed at Chinese ports, TankerTrackers said in a post on X.

The vessel is a very large crude carrier (VLCC), a type of tanker typically capable of carrying around 2 million barrels of oil. According to TankerTrackers, it left Iran about three and a half months ago.

The release of the satellite images has once again drawn attention to the continuation of Iranian oil exports despite trade restrictions and sanctions.

VLCCs are among the main vessels used to transport large volumes of crude over long distances, including on routes between the Middle East and Asian markets. Their capacity allows large quantities of oil to be shipped in a single voyage.

Iran exported more than $16 billion worth of oil in the first six months of the Iranian calendar year, which began on March 21, according to figures cited by Fars news agency.

China is one of the main destinations for Iranian oil exports. The arrival of the latest shipment comes amid sanctions-related restrictions and difficulties in transportation and financial transactions.

Iran has remained on a war footing since a US-Israeli coalition launched attacks in late February, triggering a 40-day conflict that included strikes on civilian areas and infrastructure. The country, which has been under Western sanctions for decades over its nuclear program, was also facing a maritime blockade from the south, targeting its trade and oil exports.

ECONOMIC LENS

Inflation risks, economic stability: Lessons from past policy failures



By Mohammadreza Hosseini Aliabad
Researcher in int'l economics

ANALYSIS EXCLUSIVE

Iran's economy has been grappling for years with persistent inflation, declining purchasing power and instability in the foreign exchange market. Under such circumstances, concerns about the possibility of a severe inflationary crisis are no longer merely media speculation or exaggerated warnings. They warrant closer economic scrutiny and a reassessment of the country's policy direction. The fundamental question is whether the continuation of current trends could bring Iran closer to the kind of inflationary crises experienced by some other countries.

The experience of countries that have faced severe inflationary crises, like Venezuela, shows that hyperinflation rarely results from a single factor. Instead, it typically emerges from a combination of structural weaknesses and policy failures. Heavy dependence on volatile oil revenues to finance public spending, a weakening productive base, persistent fiscal deficits, excessive monetary financing of government expenditure, institutional instability and declining public confidence in the national currency were among the main factors behind the country's prolonged economic deterioration. When monetary policy becomes a means of financing government deficits and fiscal discipline gives way to money creation, inflation can evolve from an economic challenge into a broader crisis affecting household livelihoods and social stability.

Iran's economy also faces several challenges, including fiscal deficits, imbalances within the banking system, monetary expansion, foreign exchange constraints, uncertainty surrounding the investment climate and substantial dependence of public revenues on oil-related resources. Together, these factors have placed sustained pressure on macroeconomic stability. In such an environment, depreciation of the national currency does more than push up prices. It also fuels inflationary expectations, shortens businesses' planning horizons and encourages households to protect their savings through foreign currencies and gold.

However, comparisons between Iran and countries such as Venezuela must take into account differences in their productive structures, industrial capacities, economic composition, institutional conditions and geopolitical circumstances. Predicting that Iran will inevitably follow the path of countries that have experienced similar economic policy failures would therefore be analytically unjustified. The more important task is to identify the economic mechanisms that can deepen instability and increase the risk of serious monetary crises.

One of the most damaging consequences of persistent inflation is the gradual erosion of household purchasing power and productive capacity. When incomes fail to keep pace with rising prices, the middle-class contracts, poverty expands and inequality in access to economic opportunities intensifies. At the same time, producers who cannot reliably anticipate future costs become less willing to make long-term investments. This can lead to lower productivity, weaker domestic production and greater dependence on imports, potentially creating additional inflationary pressures and reinforcing existing economic imbalances.

Addressing these challenges requires fundamental policy decisions that go beyond temporary price-control measures. Reforming the budget structure, reducing the dependence of recurrent government spending on volatile revenues, containing fiscal deficits, strengthening the independence and credibility of monetary policy, addressing banking sector imbalances, improving the business environment, promoting competitive domestic production and enhancing public financial transparency should all be central priorities.

Furthermore, reducing political and economic uncertainty and providing a credible, predictable outlook for investment are essential to achieving sustainable macroeconomic stability.

Ultimately, a severe inflationary crisis is not an inevitable outcome for Iran. Nevertheless, the experience of other countries offers important lessons about the consequences of unsustainable economic policies. Economies generally exhibit multiple warning signs before entering periods of hyperinflation. The central issue, therefore, is not simply to compare countries, but to understand how a lack of fiscal discipline, monetary stability and public confidence can impose costs on society far greater than those associated with necessary economic reforms. For Iran's economic policymakers, pursuing difficult but essential reforms remains a more sustainable course than allowing persistent inflationary pressures to deepen.

Cartoons counter our numbness to modern wars: *Caricaturist*



By Alireza Sepahvand
Freelance journalist

INTERVIEW
EXCLUSIVE

Massoud Shojai Tabatabai, a prominent Iranian cartoonist and advocate of visual arts, believes a single image can expose contradictions that politicians spend hours trying to conceal through speeches. Drawing on decades of artistic experience and curating international events, he sees cartooning as far more than a form of entertainment: it is a universal language for challenging power, confronting censorship and expressing humanitarian concerns.

In the following exclusive interview with Iran Daily, Shojai Tabatabai discusses the role of political cartoons in interpreting global developments, the policies of US President Donald Trump, the war in Gaza and the suffering of the Palestinian people. He also reflects on artistic freedom, the cultural differences that shape how audiences interpret images, and the impact of artificial intelligence on the future of cartooning.

Having worked with artists from dozens of countries through international competitions, he argues that what distinguishes a meaningful cartoon in an age of rapidly generated imagery is not merely technical skill, but the power of an original idea, the ability to expose contradictions and the courage to offer an independent perspective on the world.



Massoud Shojai Tabatabai

Massoud Shojai Tabatabai poses for a photo beside his cartoon, titled "A Few Steps Away from the School," at the "Minab School" exhibition at the Khaneh Tehran Gallery in the Iranian capital in September 2026.
IRAN DAILY

SEPAHVAND: When politicians seek to impose their narratives on the world through speeches, threats and even war, how can a cartoonist challenge those narratives with a single image? Can a political cartoon sometimes achieve what hundreds of pages of political analysis cannot?

SHOJAI TABATABAI: Throughout my years of working in cartooning and caricature, both as an artist and as a curator of international competitions, I have repeatedly witnessed how a single image can connect with people across borders, languages and political differences.

In my experience, the power of a cartoon lies in its ability to expose, with just a few lines drawn, a contradiction that a politician might spend hours trying to conceal through speeches. Politicians use their platforms, media access and political power to impose their narratives on public opinion. A cartoonist, however, can challenge those narratives with a clever idea and encourage audiences to look at an issue from a different perspective.

Donald Trump has become one of the most frequently depicted figures in political cartoons worldwide. What is it about his personality, behavior and political style that makes him such a compelling subject for cartoonists? Is he simply an ideal figure for political satire, or has he come to symbolize broader trends in contemporary politics?

My experience of curating the Trumpism competitions, particularly the Third International Trumpism Cartoon and Caricature Contest, held last year with artists from 68 countries participating, showed me that Trump and the phenomenon known as Trumpism have captured the attention and imagination of artists far beyond the borders of the United States.

Artists from different countries, with diverse cultural backgrounds and perspectives, have expressed strong criticism of Trump and drawn attention to his controversial record, including his links to the Epstein case. They portray him as a figure whose actions have contributed to several wars and whose policies have aligned him with Benjamin Netanyahu's, who has ordered the killing of Palestinian children in Gaza. Netanyahu has even been legally accused of war crimes, and his conduct is the subject of proceedings before the International Criminal Court.

For me, this demonstrated how an arrogant and politically domineering figure can become the focus of a global debate on bullying, media censorship, pressure on immigrants, racism, restrictions on freedom of expression and other pressing issues.

You recently curated an exhibition featuring works by prominent Iranian and international cartoonists on Trump, war and Israel, which attracted considerable attention and media coverage. What inspired the exhibition, and what message did you hope to convey to visitors, particularly those unfamiliar with Iran or the Iranian perspective on these developments? What questions or reflections did you want them to take away from the exhibition?

The idea behind this exhibition stemmed from a profound humanitarian and artistic concern. When war, violence and political crises affect the lives of millions of people, I believe artists cannot simply remain spectators. For me, cartooning is not merely a means of conveying humor; it is a tool for questioning, challenging power and expressing humanitarian concerns.

As I mentioned before, we sought to bring together works by Iranian and international cartoonists to explore, through art, issues such as Donald Trump's policies, war, Israel's actions and the inhumane consequences of these developments.

It was important to me that the exhibition should not simply reflect a national viewpoint, but also provide an opportunity for audiences to engage with different artistic perspectives and interpretations of major global issues.

Political cartooning in many countries faces censorship, political pressure and sometimes fierce backlash. Where do you draw the line between political satire, criticism of power and personal offence? Should artists impose limits on themselves, or is their role precisely to challenge the boundaries set by those in power?

In my view, one of the most important characteristics of political cartooning is its ability to cross conventional boundaries and challenge those in power. Throughout my professional career in cartooning and caricature, and through my experience curating international events, I have come to believe that whenever art loses its ability to question, it forfeits a significant part of its social function.

Of course, artistic freedom does not mean freedom from humanitarian responsibility. Artists must be free, but that freedom acquires meaning through knowledge, awareness and a sense of responsibility.

As for red lines, I believe artists should not abandon their questioning simply because political authorities have drawn boundaries. History has repeatedly shown that subjects once considered forbidden or beyond public discussion can eventually become part of mainstream debate. If artists always adapt themselves to imposed restrictions, art risks becoming a tool for endorsing the status quo.

Images of war now spread rapidly across social media, exposing audiences daily to scenes of death, destruction and civilian suffering. What can political cartoons do to capture public attention that photographs and news reports might not? Can satire be an effective response to human tragedy without diminishing the suffering of its victims?

Every day, we are confronted



The cartoon by Massoud Shojai Tabatabai shows US President Donald Trump (L) in horror, holding an injured Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.
IRAN DAILY

> Artists from different countries, with diverse cultural backgrounds and perspectives, have expressed strong criticism of Trump and drawn attention to his controversial record, including his links to the Epstein case. They portray him as a figure whose actions have contributed to several wars. For me, this demonstrated how an arrogant and politically domineering figure can become the focus of a global debate on bullying, media censorship, pressure on immigrants, racism, restrictions on freedom of expression and other pressing issues.



Massoud Shojai Tabatabai inspects a cartoon that depicts US President Donald Trump (C) as a pig and surrounded by several other pigs, one wearing his famous MAGA hat, with the US Capitol building and the American flag on fire in the background.
IRAN DAILY

with a flood of images showing war, destruction, death and civilian suffering. These images spread across social media at an astonishing speed, but their constant repetition can lead to a dangerous phenomenon: the normalization of human suffering.
Audiences may see countless images yet gradually lose their sensitivity to what they are witnessing.
I believe cartoons and political caricatures can offer a distinctive response to this numbness. A photograph captures an actual moment of a tragedy, while a cartoon can reveal the deeper meaning hidden within it. By choosing a particular idea, symbol or contradiction, a cartoonist can move audiences beyond simply looking at an image and encourage them to think about the causes, responsibilities and consequences of what has happened.

Cartoons are often described as a universal language, yet audiences interpret images through the lens of their own culture, religion, history and political experience. How often have you encountered different interpretations of the same image? Can a cartoon that is immediately understood in Iran convey a very different message to audiences in Europe, the United States or Asia?
Absolutely. Throughout my years of working in international cartooning and caricature, particularly through curating competitions involving artists from different countries, I have repeatedly encountered the fact that a single image can generate different interpretations across cultures. In my view, this is not a limitation of cartooning; rather, it can be one of its most valuable capacities for fostering dialogue between nations.
I regard cartooning as a universal language, but that does not mean every audience necessarily interprets an image in the same way. Like spoken and written language, visual art has its own cultural signs and codes. A historical symbol, a political figure, a visual reference to a proverb or even a hand gesture may be immediately familiar and meaningful to an Iranian audience, while requiring additional cultural or historical context for viewers in Europe, the United States or East Asia.

The war in Gaza and the Palestinian question have become major subjects of debate in international art and media. How can political cartoonists draw global attention to Palestinian suffering, the occupation and the human cost of war? At the same time, how can they maintain a clear distinction between criticizing the policies of the Israeli cabinet and resorting to ethnic or religious stereotypes?
In my view, the Palestinian question and the war in Gaza are among the issues that most clearly demonstrate the social and humanitarian responsibility of cartooning.
When we witness the actions of the Israeli regime and see the suffering of the people of Gaza, families being displaced, thousands of innocent children losing their lives and homes being destroyed, cartoonists can use the language of images to draw public attention to the inhumane dimensions of this crisis. These realities are sometimes pushed to the margins by systems of domination, the abuse of power and media censorship.

Beyond your work as a cartoonist, you have curated international exhibitions and served on the juries of major competitions. Based on your experience, has Iranian political cartooning succeeded in establishing a presence on the international stage? What distinctive artistic qualities set Iranian cartoonists apart from their counterparts around the world?
Yes, absolutely. Throughout my professional career, I have consistently sought to create opportunities for Iranian cartoonists to gain international recognition alongside leading artists from around the world and to engage in artistic dialogue with them.
For me, curating international competitions, exhibitions and specialized events has never been merely about putting together an art program. It has also been a way to showcase the potential of Iranian cartooning and establish lasting connections between Iranian artists and the international community.
To illustrate the scope of these activities, it is worth looking at the past two years. During this period, we were involved in curating seven major international events in cartooning and caricature. These included the 12th Tehran International Cartoon & Caricature Biennial, the Third International Trumpism Cartoon and Caricature Contest, the Third International Holocaust Cartoon Contest, the Terror Online Contest, competitions related to International Quds Day and the Nakba Day, curated in cooperation with Iran and Egypt, as well as an international competition focusing on the boycott of the Israeli regime at the Olympic Games.
With their diverse themes and approaches, these events provided opportunities for artists from different countries to express their views on global political, social and humanitarian issues through the language of cartoons.

With the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI), producing political and satirical images is no longer limited to artists with years of drawing experience. AI tools can generate images in seconds that might once have taken hours or days to create. Do you see this development as a threat to professional cartoonists or an opportunity to expand the art form? In an age of AI-generated imagery, what gives a political cartoon its authenticity and credibility?
In cartooning, we must distinguish between the ability to produce an image and the ability to create an idea. Artificial intelligence tools can generate a complex, visually striking and technically convincing image within seconds. However, cartooning is not simply about creating something beautiful or unusual.
Before it is a drawing skill, cartooning is the art of identifying a contradiction, understanding a situation and expressing an independent perspective on the world. The fundamental questions remain: Where does the idea come from? What does it criticize? And how does it relate to real human experience?



A cartoon by Massoud Shojai Tabatabai
IRAN DAILY

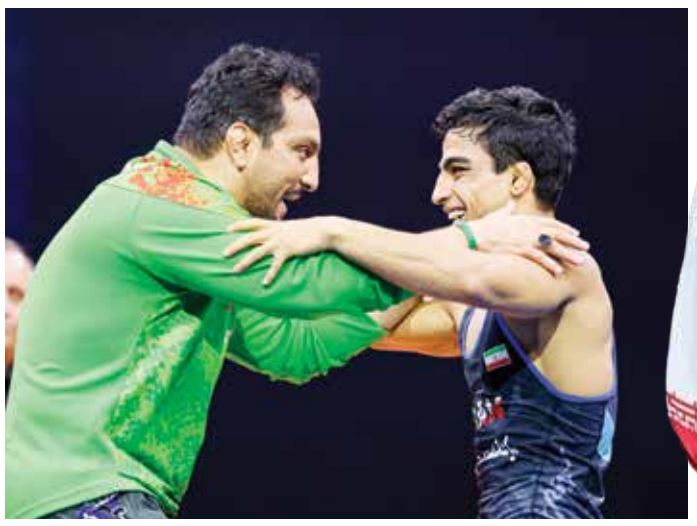
Audiences may see countless images of war, destruction, death and civilian suffering yet gradually lose their sensitivity to what they are witnessing. I believe cartoons and political caricatures can offer a distinctive response to this numbness. A photograph captures an actual moment of a tragedy, while a cartoon can reveal the deeper meaning hidden within it. By choosing a particular idea, symbol or contradiction, a cartoonist can move audiences beyond simply looking at an image and encourage them to think about the causes, responsibilities and consequences of what has happened.

What advice would you give to young cartoonists in Iran and around the world who want to use their art to challenge political power? At a time when governments can swiftly react to criticism and social media exposes artists to intense public scrutiny, how can cartoonists preserve their independence, maintain artistic standards and still make a meaningful impact on public opinion?
My first piece of advice is to study. Political cartoonists cannot offer profound and lasting criticism without understanding history, society, economics, international relations and the mechanisms of power. Sometimes a news story may appear extremely important on the surface, while its real significance lies in a contradiction hidden beneath it.
My second recommendation is to preserve intellectual independence. Independence does not mean that artists should avoid taking a position. On the contrary, many enduring works of art have emerged from clear and consciously held positions. What matters is that artists should be able to express their views through well-considered ideas and effective visual arguments.
Social media allows us to reach audiences around the world in a very short time. However, this environment can also push artists towards producing work designed merely to attract attention, provoke controversy or generate more views. I believe artistic quality should never be sacrificed for a speedy publication. An idea that takes hours or days to develop may be far more valuable than an image created solely as an immediate reaction to a news story.
My third recommendation is for young artists to develop their own visual language. Imitating successful artists can be part of the learning process, but it should never become the ultimate goal. Every artist should draw on their lived experience, social environment, cultural background and personal way of seeing the world to develop an independent visual identity.
I would also urge young artists to take international networking seriously. Participating in competitions, exhibiting their work, engaging with artists from other countries and becoming familiar with specialized media can open up new horizons. However, international recognition should not be the sole measure of an artist's worth. What matters most is consistency, intellectual growth and a commitment to artistic quality.
I am very optimistic about the future of Iran's younger generation of cartoonists, provided they do not lose sight of critical thinking, study, careful observation and human responsibility while learning to use new tools and take advantage of technological developments.

Wrestling World Championships:

Javan stuns Uguev, Zare' retains superheavyweight supremacy

Sports Desk





Iran's Ahmad Mohammadnejad-Javan inflicted a shock defeat on three-time champion Zavur Uguev in the 61kg final, while Amirhossein Zare' claimed a fourth superheavyweight title in five years, as the Iranian freestyle team collected two gold medals on the penultimate day of the Wrestling World Championships in Astana, Kazakhstan.

Despite Saturday's triumphs, Iran missed out on a second successive team title at the event, settling for third place in the standings, with the two-horse title race between the USA and Russia going down to the wire on the final day.

Javan beats the odds

It was only back in August that Javan – a silver medalist on his Senior Worlds debut last year and an Asian bronze medalist in April – faced omission from the Iranian squad for the World Championships after weighing well above his category limit at a weigh-in session at the national team camp.

Less than three months on, however, Javan, despite his relatively unconvincing performances en route to the final, delivered a spot-on display to pull off one of the biggest upsets of three days of freestyle action, avenging last year's final defeat to the Tokyo Olympic champion.

Javan handled everything Uguev threw at him in a frantic second period.

After Javan received an activity point in the first period, Uguev went ahead in the second with an activity point and a stepout from a single-leg attack.

Iranian wrestler Ahmad Mohammadnejad-Javan (R) celebrates with head coach Pejman Dorostkar after winning the freestyle 61kg title at the World Championships in Astana, Kazakhstan, on October 31, 2026.
IAWFIR

When Uguev went on the attack again, Javan countered and spun behind for a go-ahead takedown, then added a gut wrench to lead 5-2.

The Russian desperately attempted to grab Javan's leg twice more, only to see the 22-year-old Iranian get behind him on both occasions to secure a massive 9-2 victory and claim Iran's first freestyle gold in Astana.

In another final featuring Iranian and Russian wrestlers later in the day, Zare' proved to be in a league of his own in the 125kg class, cementing his status as the overwhelming favorite for the superheavyweight title at the Los Angeles Olympics in two years.

Also a world bronze medalist in 2022, Zare' had little trouble putting away Abdulla Kurbanov with an 11-0 victory that ended 56 seconds into the second period – his fourth consecutive victory by superiority in Astana, during which he did not concede a single point.

In the first period, Kurbanov tried to match Zare's power, but could only manage to give away five consecutive stepouts.

Kurbanov changed his strategy in the second period and tried to be more aggressive by shooting, but fared no better. Zare' put his full weight on Kurbanov and spun behind him before hitting a gut wrench to make it 9-0. He then got behind Kurbanov again on another shot to end the match.

For Zare', the victory keeps him undefeated since losing in the final of the Paris Olympics to Georgian Geno Petriashvili, adding to his titles at both the Asian Championships and Asian Games earlier this year.

Elsewhere, three-time silver medalist Mohammad Nokhodi made sure he would finish on the podium at the World Championships for a sixth successive occasion after progressing to the 79kg final.

An Asian Games gold medalist in October, Nokhodi opened his bid for a maiden world title with a 10-0 hammering of Tajikistan's Somonjon Ikromov, then outmuscled Latvia's Alans Amirovs in similar fashion, winning 12-2 to advance to the quarterfinals.

A nervy 6-4 victory over Mahamedkhabib Kadzimahamedau of Belarus sent the Iranian into a semifinal clash against former world U23 champion Dzhabrail Gadzhiev of Azerbaijan. Nokhodi won 9-5 to set up a final meeting with American Levi Haines, who edged out Mongolia's Suldkhuu Olonbayar on criteria (3-3) in the other semifinal.

Iran's Amirhossein Zare' celebrates with the national flag after winning the freestyle 125kg gold medal at the Wrestling World Championships in Astana, Kazakhstan, on October 31, 2026.
IAWFIR

Nokhodi's compatriot Amirreza Firouzpour, meanwhile, missed out on improving on his bronze medal from last year's edition after suffering an 11-8 defeat to American defending champion Trent Hidlay in a thrilling 92kg semifinal.

Hidlay was trailing 8-2 when he scored a takedown and used a leg lace to turn Firouzpour twice, leveling the score at 8-8 in the closing seconds of the first period. The Iranian held a criteria lead going into the break, before the American forced Firouzpour to concede another takedown to take a 10-8 lead.

Firouzpour dug deep in search of a match-winning takedown, but as he tried to jump over Hidlay, the American blocked him and planted him outside the zone to score one point, making it 11-8 and booking his place in a second successive World Championships final.

Saturday's action was one to forget for Iranian duo Mohammad Valizadeh and Amir-Mohammad Yazdani.

Valizadeh opened his campaign with an 11-0 victory over Ukraine's Roman Hutsuliak but suffered a 12-2 defeat to American Spencer Lee – a Paris 2024 Olympic silver medalist – in the round of 16.

Two-time world silver medalist Yazdani, meanwhile, pulled off nail-biting victories over Hungary's Murad Kuramagomedov (4-3) and Cuba's Geannis Garzon Tamayo (15-12) but was undone by Russia's Inalbek Sheriev in the quarterfinals, losing by fall in the first period.

Saturday's results came after Iran had collected two bronze medals through Rahman Amouzad (65kg) and Hassan Yazdani (97kg) on the preceding night, while Sina Khalili (70kg) and Kamran Qassempour (86kg) had finished empty-handed in their respective events.

Dakar 2026 Youth Olympics:

Iran into men's beach volleyball knockouts



JAVID NIKPOUR/volleyball.ir

Sports Desk

The Iranian pair of Amin Vakili and Amirreza Jamshidi secured a place in the knockout stage of the men's beach volleyball event at the Dakar 2026 Summer Youth Olympic Games with a straight-set victory over the Cayman Islands duo on Saturday.

Having beaten the Congolese pair 2-1 in their Pool B opener the previous day, Vakili and Jamshidi emerged victorious in emphatic fashion, winning 21-6 and 21-5 in their second outing to move level on four points with Austria's Paul Hohenauer and Martin Poinstingl ahead of their group-deciding clash for top spot on Sunday.

The fourth edition of the multi-sport event, staged in Africa for the first time, kicked off with the opening ceremony at the 55,000-seat Abdoulaye Wade Stadium in Diamniadio, 30km from the Senegalese capital, on Saturday.

Iran is represented by 29 athletes across two team events, including beach volleyball, and 12 individual sports at this year's edition.

The girls' futsal team makes up the largest contingent, with 10 athletes.

Beach wrestling features four Iranian competitors, while taekwondo has two participants – one girl and one boy. Badminton also has two representatives, one of each gender.

Iran's remaining athletes will compete in swimming, wushu taolu, triathlon, table tennis, boxing, road cycling, athletics, judo and fencing. The individual quota breakdown is as follows: one boy each in swimming, wushu taolu, triathlon, table tennis, road cycling, athletics and judo, and one girl each in boxing and fencing.

The Dakar Youth Olympics mark Iran's fourth participation in as many editions since the event was first introduced at Singapore 2010, where the country secured two gold, two silver and one bronze medal.

At Nanjing 2014, Iran collected three gold and three bronze medals before achieving its best performance to date with seven gold, three silver and four bronze medals at Buenos Aires 2018.

World Taekwondo Grand Prix:

Iran calls up 10-man squad for Series final

Sports Desk

Iran men's head coach Payam Khanlarkhani has called up a 10-man squad for a training camp ahead of the upcoming World Taekwondo Grand Prix Series event in Astana, Kazakhstan.

The fourth and final event of this year's Series will be staged in the Kazakh capital on November 28-29, serving as part of the qualification pathway for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics.

Reigning Olympic champion Arian Salimi will headline the Iranian roster in Astana, looking to pick up where he left off at the previous Grand Prix event in Paris last month, where he defeated Caden Cunningham in the +80kg final to repeat his triumph over the Briton in the final of the Paris 2024 Olympics.

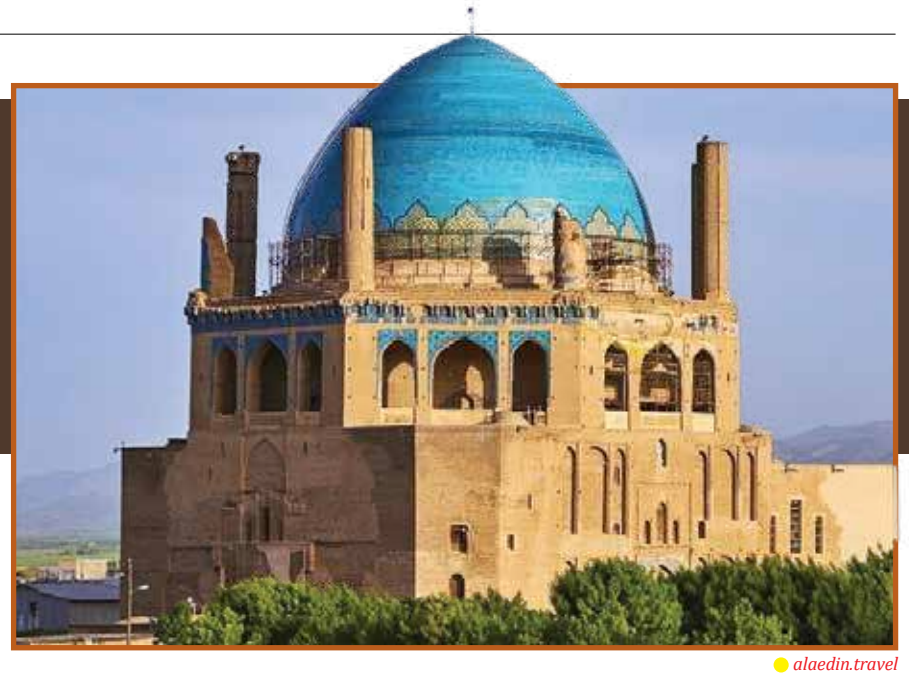
Joining Salimi at the training camp are world and Asian champion Abolfazl Zandi – also a gold medalist at the Paris Grand Prix – Mahdi Haji-Mousaei, Amirsina Bakhtiari, Yasin Valizadeh, Radin Zeinali, Danial Bozorgi, Amirreza Gholami, Ali-Asghar Alimoradian and Mohammad-Hossein Yazdani.

Notably absent from the squad is national team captain Mehran Barkhordari. The Paris Olympic silver medalist's omission from the training camp has been attributed to his failure to qualify for the Grand Prix Final.



WORLD TAEKWONDO

Restoration underway at Iran's iconic Soltaniyeh Dome



alaedin.travel

Iranica Desk

Iranian officials are stepping up restoration efforts at Soltaniyeh Dome, a UNESCO World Heritage site in northwestern Iran, as structural deterioration, weather exposure and funding challenges threaten the long-term preservation of one of the country's most important architectural landmarks.

Built in the 14th century during the Ilkhanid era, the dome is widely recognized as the world's largest brick dome. Heritage officials say sustained investment and scientifically guided conservation are essential to protecting the monument and preserving its architectural and historical significance.

According to IRNA, years of budget constraints have delayed essential conservation work. Officials warn that cracks, changes in surface texture and other signs of deterioration underscore the need for timely intervention.

A renewed restoration effort followed a Nov. 20, 2025, visit to Soltaniyeh by Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri, Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts. He called for coordinated support from government agencies to address funding shortages and accelerate restoration.



IRNA

Work is now underway on vulnerable sections of the monument, including its intricate decorative features and surrounding archaeological areas.

Mehdi Gholami, director of the Soltaniyeh Dome World Heritage Site, said restoration crews are repairing decorative architectural elements on the dome's northwestern side and installing protective coverings to prevent further damage from rain, snow and other weather conditions.

The work is intended to strengthen vulnerable sections, stabilize decorative tilework and protect the structure from environmental damage.

The current project began about two months before Gholami's remarks and was expected to continue for another month. The work includes repairs to decorative muqarnas — intricate, three-dimensional architectural forms characteristic of Islamic design — at a height of about 115 feet.

The last major restoration of these features was carried out by Italian teams about 50 years ago.

Crews have removed debris, reduced unnecessary structural loads, clarified the original outlines of the decorative elements and stabilized tilework with suitable mortar. A custom protective covering made from large bricks produced at the site is also being prepared for installation by specialists.

Gholami said the use of locally sourced materials compatible with the original construction would help preserve the monument's authenticity while reducing the risk of weather-related damage.

Conservation work also extends to archaeological areas east of the dome, where crews are preparing excavation trenches and stabilizing slopes to prevent rockfalls.

Gholami said the work is intended to protect archaeological remains while improving safety for tourists and researchers.

Deep excavation trenches have been a feature of the eastern area for decades. Officials are now working to make the site more accessible without compromising the integrity of its historic remains.

Protective mesh is being installed to stabilize slopes, prevent falling rocks and secure exposed soil. The measures are designed to limit damage to archaeological layers while reducing risks to visitors.

Officials say the project reflects a broader effort to balance heritage preservation with tourism development.

Stabilizing the terrain could allow visitors to explore the archaeological areas without putting ancient remains at risk.

The work is part of a wider management plan to improve visitor infrastructure while safeguarding the site's historical significance.

Soltaniyeh Dome is a major landmark of Iranian architecture and an important tourism destination in Zanjan province. Its long-term preservation, however, will depend on more than short-term repairs.

Officials must secure sustained funding, coordinate restoration across the complex, protect vulnerable decorative features and ensure that tourism and archaeological research do not damage the site.

Mazari palm plays vital role in Mehrestan's economy, environment

Iranica Desk

The Mazari palm, known locally as "Daz" in Baluchestan and also referred to as the dwarf palm, is an important part of the natural and cultural heritage of Mehrestan in southeastern Iran. Adapted to the region's hot, dry climate, the plant has been used for generations by local and nomadic communities, providing raw materials for traditional handicrafts, supporting household livelihoods and contributing to the conservation of the natural environment.

With more than 50 traditional uses, the Mazari palm is deeply rooted in the daily lives and cultural identity of Baluch communities. Its fruit is consumed, its seeds are used to make prayer beads, and its leaves and fibers are turned into a wide range of handicrafts and household items, according to chtn.ir.

These include baskets, traditional sandals, mats, sugar bowls, prayer mats, saddlebags, animal-shaped ornaments, kebab skewers, toothpicks, tablecloths and date baskets. The leaves are also used to construct traditional shelters known as Kapars, along with many other items closely linked to local livelihoods and the regional economy.

Beyond its cultural significance, the Mazari palm represents a valuable connection between nature and human life in Mehrestan. Its diverse uses offer opportunities to expand home-based employment, strengthen the handicrafts sector and promote locally made products, potentially improving household incomes while showcasing the region's traditional skills.

The head of Mehrestan's Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts said the Mazari palm was among Baluchestan's native palm-like plants, with different parts of it serving a variety of purposes in everyday life.

Ebrahim Mohammadi said the plant's fruit is harvested during the local Hamin season, which coincides with the date-harvesting period, and is consumed as food. Its seeds are also used in traditional crafts to make prayer beads. These uses demonstrate that the Mazari palm is more than just a plant species; it is an integral part of the region's heritage and traditional way of life.

One of the plant's most important applications is in mat weaving, a craft with a long history among the people of Baluchestan, particularly nomadic communities and families familiar with traditional handicrafts. Its leaves are used to make Kapars, mats, tablecloths and a variety of woven products. In addition to their practical uses, these handmade items reflect the region's cultural identity and craftsmanship.





chtn.ir

Mohammadi added that local artisans and craftspeople use the plant's leaves and fibers to produce a wide range of items, including fruit bowls, sugar bowls, tissue-box covers and other decorative and functional products. Made from natural materials using traditional techniques, these products have considerable potential to introduce Mehrestan's indigenous crafts to tourists and handicraft enthusiasts.

Highlighting the plant's economic importance, Mohammadi said expanding the production and marketing of products made from the Mazari palm could create income-generating opportunities for rural and nomadic households, particularly those involved in home-based handicraft production.

He noted that with appropriate support for training, improved product quality, attractive packaging and better access to markets, this traditional craft could expand beyond local consumption and become a more sustainable source of income for producers.

He stressed that handicrafts could play a greater role in the local economy if their traditional character and production methods were preserved while market demands were also taken into account. Promoting products made from the Mazari palm at handicraft exhibitions, local markets, cultural events and through online sales platforms could raise their profile and create more opportunities for producers.

Emphasizing the importance of preserving indigenous knowledge, Mohammadi said the skills involved in processing the plant's leaves and producing woven goods were part of the region's intangible cultural heritage and needed to be passed on to younger generations. Supporting local artisans, encouraging young people to learn the craft and documenting traditional production techniques could help prevent these skills from disappearing.

Mohammadi said the Mazari palm had the potential to become one of Mehrestan's signature sources of handicraft materials and local products, provided that greater efforts were made to promote the plant, support producers, expand markets and protect natural resources.

Harnessing this potential could help preserve Baluch culture and identity while strengthening household economies and creating new employment opportunities. The head of Mehrestan's Department of Natural Resources also highlighted the plant's environmental importance, saying the town's hot, dry climate, limited water resources and the vulnerability of some natural areas to soil erosion made the protection of native vegetation particularly important.

Abdolvahed Jamshidzadeh said maintaining vegetation cover and preventing damage to natural habitats were essential, as healthy plant cover helps protect soil against erosion.

He added that the Mazari palm, thanks to its adaptation to the region's dry conditions, forms part of Baluchestan's natural vegetation. Protecting the plant and other native species could help maintain soil stability and safeguard natural habitats. Damage to vegetation, unsustainable harvesting and the destruction of natural areas could worsen wind erosion and increase the movement of soil particles. For this reason, protecting native species should be an integral part of natural resource management.

One of the key functions of vegetation, he said, was to reduce wind speed near the ground and limit the movement of soil particles. Plant cover can also reduce the direct impact of raindrops on the soil and slow surface runoff, helping to limit certain erosion processes. Alongside other native plants, the Mazari palm contributes to the natural vegetation cover that helps maintain the stability of the region's ecosystems.

Referring to dust storms, Jamshidzadeh said that in arid regions, the loss of vegetation and exposure of bare soil could make soil particles more vulnerable to wind erosion. Protecting native plants and preventing habitat degradation were among the measures that could help manage areas susceptible to dust generation.

However, he cautioned that tackling dust storms required a combination of measures, including proper soil and water management, vegetation conservation and the restoration of degraded land. This responsibility, he stressed, could not be attributed to a single plant species.

He said the protection of the Mazari palm should take into account the natural conditions of its habitats and the plant's capacity for regeneration. Harvesting its leaves and using other parts of the plant could continue as long as these activities followed sustainable harvesting principles. Excessive harvesting, damage to individual plants and destruction of their habitats, however, could reduce the species' population over time and harm the natural environment.

Raising awareness among local communities, involving residents in the protection of natural areas and promoting sustainable methods of harvesting native plants are important measures for safeguarding these resources. Local residents and nomadic communities have developed valuable knowledge of native plants through their long-standing relationship with the region's natural environment. Drawing on this experience can make conservation planning more effective.

Jamshidzadeh concluded by stressing that the Mazari palm should be considered from environmental, cultural and economic perspectives. While it supports traditional livelihoods and handicraft production, it is also an important part of Baluchestan's natural vegetation. Protecting its habitats, preventing the degradation of natural areas and promoting sustainable harvesting can help preserve biodiversity, maintain soil stability and pass this natural heritage on to future generations.

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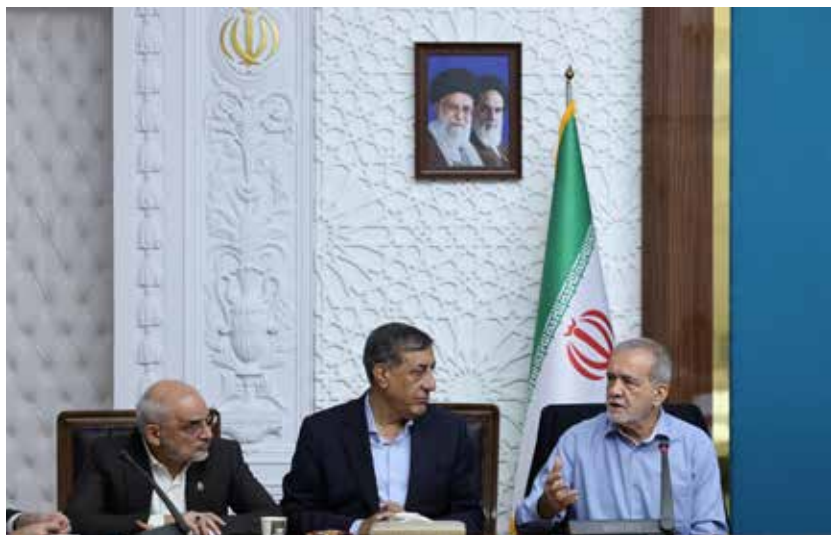
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Pezeshkian urges overhaul of targeted aid



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian(R) speaks during a Government Information Council meeting in Tehran on November 1, 2026.
president.ir

Social Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian has called for an overhaul of Iran's subsidy system, ordering the government to redirect public funds from wealthier citizens to low-income households and cut living costs in deprived and border regions.

The government launched a food voucher program in January, replacing a targeted subsidy scheme that had been in place since 2010 under which every individual received a monthly cash handout.

Last week, the government raised monthly payments under the food voucher program by 50%, giving 15 million rials each to nearly 40 million people. The program aims to help households buy a range of essential food items.

Speaking at a meeting of the Government Information Council on Sunday, Pezeshkian said public resources belonged to all citizens and should be distributed according to household income and need, rather than equally.

"The government has a duty to direct its support toward those who genuinely need it," he said, arguing that people with sufficient financial means should not receive assistance intended for vulnerable families.

Pezeshkian called for the use of international experience to identify wealthier beneficiaries and remove them from welfare lists. He said low-income and vulnerable households should take priority, particularly women-headed families, orphans, people without family support, unemployed people and families without adequate income.

The criteria for identifying these groups were clear, he said, adding that explaining the priorities could help build public support.

Acknowledging limited state resources, Pezeshkian said the government could not afford to provide broader assistance to every social group and should focus first on those in greatest need.

He also criticized the distribution of energy subsidies, saying it was unacceptable for wealthier people to benefit from subsidized water, electricity and natural gas while poorer households lacked adequate support.

"The government should stop subsidizing those who did not need assistance and redirect the savings to low-income groups," he said.

Pezeshkian also called for inflation and living costs in deprived and border provinces to be lower than in Tehran.

"The residents of less-developed areas should have access to essential goods at lower prices, with measures to maintain price stability," he added.

He referred to consultations with the Mostazafan Foundation and the Basij Organization, urging them to help develop practical measures to cut basic goods prices in disadvantaged regions. Such efforts must move beyond planning and produce concrete results, he said.

Pezeshkian said the Government Information Council had a key role in explaining the government's support policies and preparing the public for subsidy reforms.

"Dialogue and clear explanations of the rationale behind the changes were essential to securing public acceptance," he said.

He urged government agencies and other sectors of society to work together to ease economic hardship and ensure a fairer distribution of national resources. The government, he said, must not allow vulnerable households to bear the burden of inflation and rising living costs.

Iran eases currency rules to boost tourism

Arts & Culture Desk



Foreign tourists visit Naqsh-e Jahan Square in Isfahan, central Iran.
BORNA NEWS AGENCY

Iran is introducing new measures to facilitate travel for foreign visitors and support its tourism industry, including a currency exchange system at entry points and 123 trillion rials (about $45 million) in loans for tourism and handicrafts businesses, the tourism minister said.

Reza Salehi-Amiri outlined the measures at a meeting with tourism associations in Tehran on October 31, 2026.

He identified Iraq, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Tajikistan as priority markets for attracting visitors, IRNA reported on Sunday.

A finalized mechanism will allow foreign tourists entering Iran by air, land or sea to exchange currency at banks at the unofficial market rate, subject to a 2% commission.

"Bank Shahr, Bank Mellat and Bank Refah are ready to provide the service. Each visitor may bring up to $10,000, with a separate allowance for every family member," he said.

The government also plans to provide about $45 million in support loans. Thirty percent will go to ecotourism projects and 70% to handicrafts, he added.

Iran also plans to expand regional travel links. Salehi-Amiri said the country and Iraq aimed to reach 10 million tourist exchanges between them.

"Tehran plans to facilitate overland travel from Iraq through western border crossings and connect visitors to domestic flights to Mashhad in the northeast, Isfahan in central Iran, Shiraz in the south and northern destinations," he said.

Coordination is under way with governors in Ilam and Kermanshah in western Iran and West Azerbaijan province in the northwest, he added.

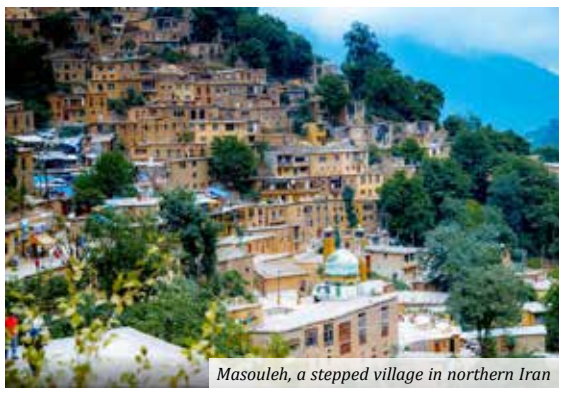
Restoring international flights and lifting travel warnings are essential to reviving tourism, he said. Flights to China and Russia are operating, but expansion requires further permits and coordination.

A regulation establishing a Health Tourism Steering Council has been approved after two years of consultations.

Iran has about 800 museums, nearly 300 managed by the ministry. Some remain closed for security reasons but are expected to reopen within five days of receiving clearance. Salehi-Amiri said protecting cultural heritage takes priority over revenue.

Iran renews push for Masouleh's UNESCO listing

Arts & Culture Desk



Masouleh, a stepped village in northern Iran

An ICOMOS expert is conducting a field assessment of Masouleh, a stepped village in northern Iran, as the country seeks to advance the town's nomination for UNESCO World Heritage status, three years after the bid was deferred for further work.

Shaiful bin Shahidan, an evaluator for the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), said the assessment would examine Masouleh's historical, cultural and architectural features against World Heritage criteria.

He described the 2023 deferral as an opportunity to document more fully the town's outstanding universal value, authenticity and distinctive characteristics, rather than a setback.

Masouleh's proposed cultural landscape lies in the Alborz Mountains in northern Iran. It reflects a long history of semi-nomadic pastoralism, mining and metalworking, alongside the town's distinctive stepped architecture and traditional livelihoods.

The UNESCO World Heritage Committee deferred the nomination at its 45th session in 2023, asking Iran to reconsider the scope of the proposed site and clarify the themes that could support a stronger case for its outstanding universal value.

The committee also called for greater community involvement in heritage management and a clear development strategy to ensure tourism does not undermine the area's social and economic fabric.

Shahidan said a comprehensive report based on the field assessment would be submitted to ICOMOS for review once the expert process was complete. The findings and supporting documents would then be examined under the organization's procedures.

A decision on whether to inscribe Masouleh on the World Heritage List will be made through UNESCO's formal process after the expert review.

Vietnam, Kashan discuss trade in local products

Arts & Culture Desk



Vietnamese Ambassador to Iran Luong Ngoc Nguyen (3rd L) holds a traditional souvenir from Kashan as he poses for a photo with Iranian officials in Kashan on November 1, 2026.
IRNA

Vietnam and the central Iranian city of Kashan have discussed expanding trade ties, with a focus on local products including rosewater, carpets and mineral goods, alongside Vietnamese coffee, cashew nuts and electrical products.

Vietnamese Ambassador to Iran Luong Ngoc Nguyen raised the potential for commercial cooperation during a meeting with Kashan Governor Mojtaba Raei on Sunday, IRNA reported.

The discussions highlighted opportunities to connect Kashan's traditional industries and local products with Vietnamese markets, while exploring potential trade in goods from both sides.

Nguyen said Vietnam could also benefit from Kashan's carpet industry and that efforts would be made to introduce the historic Iranian city to the Vietnamese public.

Raei called for joint meetings between economic delegations to identify areas of cooperation and strengthen commercial ties. He also proposed that Vietnam help restore one of Kashan's historic houses and turn it into a "Friend's House".

Kashan, known for its rosewater production and carpet-making tradition, has a population of more than 364,000. The city lies about 200 kilometers north of Isfahan, in central Iran.